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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN GENERALS SUPPORT GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH
U.S. AFRICAN COMMAND

REF: A. ABUJA 1398 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. ABUJA 1405 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McNulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4. (B) and (D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) During a September 8 to 11 familiarization visit and roundtable planning conference in Stuttgart, six general officers from Nigeria's military training commands expressed support for greater engagement with the U.S. African Command (AFRICOM). Nigerian military leaders agreed to seek further cooperation in training and capacity-building during the next five years. The generals cautioned, however, that lack of airlift capacity threatened Nigeria's ability to participate in future peacekeeping operations. Though expressing frustration over political interference within the Ministry of Defense (MOD) over selection of candidates for training courses, the generals asserted the military's firm commitment to civilian rule. Generals Pennap and Obi echoed President Yar'Adua's declaration that the GON would not extend the Niger Delta amnesty deadline beyond October 4. END SUMMARY.

NIGERIAN GENERALS SEEK INCREASED COOPERATION

[1](#)2. (C) During their September visit to AFRICOM Headquarters, six general officers from Nigeria's Defense Headquarters and three military component commands expressed support for greater cooperation with AFRICOM. The officers, including Defense Headquarters Training and Operations Chief Major General Ishaku Pennap, Army Training Chief Major General Moses Obi, Defense Training Chief Commodore Titus Awoyemi, Army Training Director Brigadier General Kwaskebe Kalayi, Navy Training Director Commodore Olanseunmi Shekoni, and Air Force Training Deputy Director Group Captain Paul Imaji, agreed that the visit to Stuttgart had improved their perception of AFRICOM's role and intentions. General Pennap declared, "The time has come to work with AFRICOM and build the capacity of Nigerian forces."

[1](#)3. (C) On AFRICOM's improving image within the Nigerian military, he cautioned, however that it takes time." He added that "We will increase our involvement,8 but

requested sufficient time to plan for proposed bilateral activities, as we are bound by our political masters.⁸ By the end of the visit, only Commodore Awoyemi remained suspicious of AFRICOM motives, as he twice asked where AFRICOM planned to move its headquarters to the continent, despite repeated assurances to the contrary. Both Generals Pennap and Obi sought increased cooperation in civil affairs. According to Pennap, the Nigerian military "has no civil affairs capacity," averring that military leaders did not yet understand the concept very well.

KEEN INTER-SERVICE RIVALRY READILY APPARENT

14. (C) Keen inter-service rivalry was apparent throughout the visit, as the Nigerian generals openly vied with each other over which service would receive potential U.S. military assistance. (COMMENT: Inviting generals from all services proved valuable, as U.S. counterparts heard a broad variety of views. With the exception of Joint Task Force operations in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian military has little recent experience with joint training and operations. END COMMENT.)

INTERFERENCE FROM POLITICIANS

15. (C) Shekoni and Imaji told us that most resistance to engagement with AFRICOM came from political appointees at the Ministry of Defense -- not from military officers. Shekoni

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claimed that politicians regularly interfered with the Navy's selection of participants for International Military Education and Training programs. Shekoni said politicians sometimes substituted a friend's relative for the Navy's preferred candidate. Even the Minister of Defense recently selected a candidate for a Navy training slot without forwarding the invitation to the Navy for its input. Imaji said the practice occurred within the Air Force as well. Sometimes, he noted, the military services had to "trade" future training opportunities to persuade politicians to yield to the military's candidates.

CONCERN OVER CAPACITY AND CORRUPTION

16. (C) Generals Pennap and Obi claimed that Nigeria was slowly losing its capacity to participate in peacekeeping operations. "Nigeria has a capacity and logistics problem," they declared, noting that Nigeria lacked airlift capacity and could no longer maintain its equipment properly. During a recent visit to Sudan, Obi observed significant equipment problems among Nigerian peacekeeping forces that he said, if not corrected, would prevent Nigeria from participating in future peacekeeping operations. Obi, Shekoni, and Imaji also spoke candidly about their concerns over corruption in the Nigerian military.

NIGER DELTA AMNESTY

17. (C) Both Pennap and Awoyemi echoed President Yar'Adua's declaration that the GON would not extend the Niger Delta amnesty deadline beyond October 4. They commented that militants would feel increasing pressure to surrender weapons and accept amnesty as the deadline approached. "The process must be given time to work," said Pennap. More importantly, he opined, the international community would view militants after the deadline as "pariahs" to the peace process, thereby placing the GON in a better position. Only Obi remained skeptical, laughing when asked whether the amnesty process

would succeed. Obi, Awoyemi, and Imaji attributed crime in the Delta to young people "just not seeking jobs," without acknowledging that government policies played any role in the region's lack of economic development and job opportunities.

UNREST IN THE NORTH FOMENTED BY POLITICIANS

¶8. (C) All six generals agreed that Boko Haram violence in July (refs A and B) stemmed from political -- not ideological -- reasons. Awoyemi claimed "politicians had manipulated the uneducated, and it got out of control," while Kalayi nodded in agreement. Obi echoed this view, claiming that "politicians manipulated religious sentiments for political purposes and took it too far."

¶9. (C) Based on his family's personal experience in Jos (Plateau State), Obi said he did not believe a religious divide was forming between the northern and southern halves of the country. The other generals expressed confidence that significant unrest would not recur, because the GON had Qsignificant unrest would not recur, because the GON had successfully "contained" an isolated political problem. According to Awoyemi, "people on the ground are now looking out for the signs." Obi stated that future problems would be caught earlier. All six generals expressed support for how the GON acted against Boko Haram, commenting that the military should not have played any greater role.

MILITARY'S ROLE IN TODAY'S NIGERIA

¶10. (C) Imaji assured us that many senior officers, including all those on the visit to Stuttgart, believe the military should not become involved in Nigerian politics. He said, "The military is not the solution for our political

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problems," adding that "We learned our lesson from 1999" -- referring to the end of military rule in Nigeria. Imaji predicted the military would not get involved in politics in the future.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) By the end of the visit, the generals' impressions toward AFRICOM had changed from suspicious to receptive of what AFRICOM has to offer the Nigerian military in training and materiel. The lone exception remained Commodore Awoyemi. The orientation visit should pay high dividends in promoting closer military-to-military relations. Greater engagement with the U.S. military, including AFRICOM, should foster both greater professionalism and democratic ideals within the Nigerian military. END COMMENT.

SANDERS